

Indigenous Peoples-P&B Chapter (Notes)

- **Cultural Diversity**=distinct human cultures as a desirable goal since they are a repository of "cultural knowledge," which enriches the "idea pool" (like a gene pool, or the total genetic information encoded within a population) of humanity as a whole, an adaptive element in confronting change.
 - e.g., the **Ona of *Tierra del Fuego*** ("Land of Fire," the southernmost tip of South America just north of the antarctic circle), alive in 1885, the last one died in 1974. Now this region is totally uninhabited!
- **Indigenous Peoples**=Local peoples who are "of a place," that is, resident in a region for many centuries, specifically, longer than any recent & identifiable immigrant or colonist groups. This category has the implication of a present-day ethnic minority, 4th World groups in particular.
- **Ethnic Enclaves**=the usually interior regions of isolated indigenous peoples within the area of the nominal control of usually 3rd World states (but not always; the U.S. is 1st World state yet we still retain reservations for indigenous peoples (Native Americans or Amerindians)).
- **600 million indigenous peoples continue to exist in the present world** (but this number is dropping rapidly, as most either become peasants or are killed off by disease or genocide)
- **"The White Man's Burden"**=the racist doctrine of the 19th cen. that was implicitly "social Darwinist" in tone and was one of the supposed "benefits" of "progress," native peoples had to be (often forcibly) "uplifted" to serve the Euro-Americans & assimilate to their cultures, usually on the lowest social level.
- **Colonial Origin of Nation-State Boundaries**=The boundaries of most 3rd World states are the legacies of European colonialism from the 16th-19th centuries, that is, present-day borders were often created by Europeans who were the colonial rulers in the 19th century, not by the modern peoples who inhabit them (i.e., present day "Iraq" is only 80 yrs old & was created by the British, not Iraqis):
 - **They do not correspond to culture-geographic and ethnic areas** (the present borders cross-cut both "real" distributions).
 - **Therefore, in many places, such as South America, there is no single nation-state border that is ratified by international agreement-all are in dispute.**
 - **Lastly, these states do not control this disputed hinterland, allowing (by default) illegal mining, drug-production & other ungoverned**

activities to take place therein, all of which put indigenous groups at risk.

- E.g., the *garimpeiros*, or poor free-lance miners, who have invaded Yanomamo territory, bringing diseases, murder & social disruption.
- **"Internal Colonialism"***=the transfer of European colonialist agendas to the now independent ex-colonies, who continue their ex-ruler's imperialist tendencies.
 - E.g., Indonesia, the ex-colony of the Dutch, transfers millions of its citizens from over-populated Java to Irian Jaya, western New Guinea, because the latter was also a part of the Dutch colonial empire, even tho it was never a part of historic Indonesia. The Indonesians use the self-serving logic that the latter region is "underpopulated," whereas, in fact, it is already long-inhabited by indigenous Melanesia "Papuan" peoples, who are racially, linguistically & culturally completely unlike the Indonesian Southeast Asian population, thus starting a local independence movement.
- **Highways for "progress" bring death instead**, usually by the introduction of disease and colonists. E.g.:
 - Since the 1970s Brazil has cut roads into its vast Amazonian interior to foster "development," with the result that it has lost 1/3rd of its native population since 1900, & the indigenous ethnic groups that remain have lost land to colonists.
 - The Yanomamö, in Venezuela, are no exception; until the 1970s most of the 9,000 Yanomamö were outside of contact & increasing demographically; in 1974 Brazil drove a road thru their territory, killing 1/2 by influenza & measles; in the 1980s dirt airstrips reached the most remote groups to gold prospectors, by 1990 the area was full of mostly impoverished gold seekers from the arid northeast of Brazil (the *garimpeiros*), extracting gold worth 1 billion dollars, but to do so they poured arsenic & mercury into the rivers, killing many of the surviving Yanomamö & polluting the rivers. By 2005 the Yanomamo have lost their rights to 2/3rd of their territory.
- **Balance of Trade (Hard Currency) Needs**=To satisfy the World Bank many 3rd World countries like Indonesia & the Phillippines have opened their own interior to logging to earn foreign exchange; the result is that once-wet & green Borneo, home to the indigenous Dyak, is now burning!
- **Even Ecologists Can Cause Problems**=In the desire to protect habitat &

animal life thru the creation of Game Preserves, well-meaning foreign groups can inflict survival issues on indigenous people!

- Ex., the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, 2nd largest in all Sub-Saharan Africa (Botswana), was created to support the San (Kung!) Bushmen hunters & gatherers, but when the latter began hunting on horseback, environmentalists persuaded the European Union to put pressure on Botswana to move the San out, which was done in the 1990s, partly to the benefit of Safari Camps, whose tourists & Land Rovers do more harm than the few San on horses. The San's new territory, predictably, has few trees & resources + no governmental aid.
- **External Advocacy Groups**=2 principal anthropological groups seek to protect indigenous groups:
 - **Cultural Survival** near Harvard in the U.S., with its own Newsletter & aid program, is an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) = a private foundation
 - IWAGIA in Denmark, another NGO, which also tries to protect indigenous groups, and publishes a series of ethnographic monographs & ethnographic surveys on endangered groups.
- **Indigenous Political Action**=Some indigenous groups are fighting back, particularly those with bellicose traditions like the Kayapó Indians of the Brazilian Amazon, whose use their warlike reputation to keep miners & other intruders at bay & employ video-recorders to record land incursions, even communicating with other villages via shortwave!
 - In the 1980s the World Bank was to back 2 huge hydro-electric dams that would have flooded enormous tracts of jungle (85% of which belonged to indigenous groups). 2 Kayapó leaders & the American anthropologist Darrell Posey went to Washington D.C. to stop it & the Brazilian government brought charges of "foreign interference" against them.
 - **Maori of New Zealand**, another tribal group with a highly bellicose history, this time in the South Pacific, successfully brought suit against the British for illegally taking a sacred volcano in the 19th cen.!
- **Internal Modernizing Minorities**=Many traditional groups have within themselves minorities, usually some of the young, who want to assimilate to the surrounding societies, acquiring education, money & travel. On occasion these differences can prove factional:
 - like the "Traditionalists" & "Modernizers" on some North American Indian reservations like the Hopi. In any case, the choice should be

voluntary, not imposed from without.

- **"Human Zoos"***=It is impossible to keep humans penned-in, but at the same time it is necessary to protect them while they are made aware of, and adjust to, the outside world. They must have the time to decide upon "selective acculturation," for "total acculturation" = "cultural death."
 - E.g., when Peru and international NGOs created the huge Manu National Park recently, they sent in scientific teams to study & record the flora & fauna, only to discover that there were uncontacted stone-age hunters & gatherer Indians living in the park!
- **Entry into the National & World Systems at the Lowest Level**=The problem is that assimilated tribal people do not enter the local society at the highest or even the medial level, but are forced in at the lowest levels where debt-servitude, prostitution, poverty and deculturation are their only fate.
- **Anthropologists are "advocates" of cultural diversity for 4 reasons:**
 - we are familiar with the dismal record of forced acculturation since the 19th century,
 - emotionally, we identify with indigenous people because we have worked among them,
 - our professional training gives us the perspective of cultural relativism, which holds all cultures to be equally meriting of study, not assimilation.
 - because of fieldwork, & our marginality, we are less committed to "progress," & are not willing to see indigenous peoples pay its costs & receive few of its benefits, unlike the majority in the West.
- **Ethical concerns for the rights of others & respect for their traditional cultures are the basis for lobbying for indigenous groups.**
- **Vanishing Cultural Knowledge**=Just like the modern world is losing "genetic diversity" thru species loss at an unprecedented level, so too is the world suffering "cultural loss" thru the traditional knowledge that is disappearing, particularly as the old die. All of humanity suffers if large amounts of centuries-old cultural knowledge dies.
- **Global/Local Knowledge**=The former via writing, is likely to be preserved in some format, the latter, ethnic knowledge, because it is oral & behavioral will not survive unless it is recorded by anthropologists & actively transmitted.
- **Traditionally anthropologists learned about other peoples, now they seek to learn from them.**
- **Ethno-Medicine Contributions**=See Mark Plotkin's 1993 book, *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice*; many pharmaceutical firms send

anthropologists into the jungle to learn of traditional herbs that may have active ingredients & send them back to the lab for analysis. Ex:

- **quinine:** to combat malaria is a traditional herbal remedy that comes from the bark of the cinchona tree, it was learned about in the 17th cen. from Peruvian jungle Amerindians.
- **Madagascaran periwinkle:** used to treat childhood leukemia, Hodgkin's Disease & other cancers, was discovered after 1st being used by indigenous groups on that island continent.
- **Curare:** a muscle relaxant from the *chondodendron* tree used by many lowland S.A. Indians as a hunting poison is now used to still the heart of patients undergoing open-heart surgery.
- **Ancient Greek use of willow tree bark for pain & fever:** led to the 19th cen. synthesizing of aspirin (now also used to prevent heart attacks, among many other uses), etc.
- **There remain some 250,000 species of higher plants;** Perhaps as many as 40,000 contain medical or other useful properties, only 1,100 have been studied! Much remains for ethnobotanists to document, study.
- **Adaptive Wisdom & the preservation of crop varieties ("Land Races"):** uniquely adapted to diverse environments; their germplasm is being stock-piled in seed banks, but much diversity is already lost in high-yielding but expensive & "delocalized" hybrids (the farmers cannot replant + need lots of water & fertilizer).
- **The "Green Revolution" of the 1960s used hybrids:** to keep pace of population growth, even tho it also caused a lot of social dislocation & ecological damage, but much of its potential is now exhausted while the demographic juggernaut continues.
- **Only 4 crops (2 from New World) support world population (over 1/2 of food):**
 - wheat (from ancient Western Asia, the Middle east),
 - rice (from ancient Asia),
 - maize=corn (a Mexican Amerindian invention),
 - potatoes (a Peruvian Indian cultigen)
 - Irish Potato Famine=& Lack of genetic diversity in the few strains of imported potatoes caused the 1840s Irish potato famine where more than a million people died & 1 million more migrated to the U.S.
- **Traditional Cultigens=**Grain Amaranth, a weed-like grain very high in protein, was domesticated in Central & South America. Because it was employed in Aztec rituals the Spaniards linked it to heathenism & burned

whole fields, thus preventing its adoption. It may yet make a global contribution to addressing world hunger. Another crop rich in protein (2x as much as corn) is the Andean seed crop Quinoa.

- **Cultural Alternatives**=Many traditional societies have a more holistic view of the world (resources to be "managed," as a natural system, not "mined" as an extractable resource as in the West). This "green" view is already seeping into the periphery of the Western Tradition in the form of the ecology movement
- **"Progress"**=The modern Western notion that life is always getting better (a rising curve on the Western linear time-line), largely thru greater consumption, which is now 75% of the U.S. economy.
 - One could argue that if we produced & made more of what we use, we would feel the need to consume less pre-manufactured goods.
- **Many Worlds Needed for Consumption**=[The problem is that if all countries consumed at the same level as the 1st World U.S. we would need the equivalent of 4 earths to sustain that level of consumption. What happens if many 3rd World countries actually succeed in becoming 2nd & 1st World?-the current World System could not support that.]
 - **The Amish**=One of the few Western groups to opt out of progress & substitute spiritual & familial gratifications for continual material betterment. The roots of the fundamentalist protestant sect of the Amish lie in Switzerland, where they broke off from the Anabaptist movement in 1693. Persecuted in Europe because of their practices of shunning (ostracism) & foot-washing, they migrated to North America in the 1700s-early 1800s [the date of their clothing] & settled in Penn., where their pro-natalist views have led to population growth & out-migration to the Mid-West & Ontario. They manifest 4 Key Cultural Values (all of which contrast to those of the "English"=mainstream U.S. culture):
 - Individual pride is sinful; one must submit to community will
 - "Plain People"=simplicity of living & adornment
 - Egalitarian ("equality in the eyes of God"), farms limited in size to what can be cultivated by horses ("partitive inheritance")-personal wealth & consumption are frowned upon
 - Work ethic (work is virtuous; cooperative projects even better)
- **Mark Leone**=A modern American historical archaeologist has delineated the essential elements of the "Utopian Technology" that makes the Amish & similar groups like the Shakers recognizable:
 - **Institutional Completeness**
 - **Geographical [or Cultural] Isolation**

- **Sacred, or "frozen" (Archaic) technology that resists delocalization (the emphasis on human & horse power).**
- **Selective Acculturation**=Yet, the Amish are not restricted solely to 19th cen. tech., they selectively borrow just enough to keep their society viable; private phones are banned, but community phones are not; car ownership is banned but Amish may drive in special "Amish taxis," driven by non-Amish to visit distant kin; electrical hookup is banned, but individual generator-produced electricity isn't, etc.